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ABSTRACT

The 4-day school week offers solutions to the financial and instructional problems often faced by small rural schools. Two southern Oregon schools implemented the 4-day school week on a trial basis in 1982-83 and, along with five eastern Oregon districts, continue to use this schedule today. The primary purpose of the change to a 4-day week was reduction in cost. According to the enthusiastic responses of parents, staff, and students on annual surveys, the 4-day week produced: (1) a 15% to 23% reduction in transportation costs plus additional savings in energy costs and nonteacher salaries; (2) more actual learning time due to less set-up time and fewer interruptions; (3) more time for staff development, extracurricular activities, and family business; (4) less student and teacher absenteeism; (5) higher teacher morale and student enthusiasm; (6) more parental involvement; and (7) no adverse effects on student achievement. The following disadvantages have been noted: (1) difficulties if restoration of the 5-day week is desired; (2) increased costs for some parents; (3) increased teacher stress; (4) tiredness in younger children; (5) the impact of holidays on the schedule; and (6) concerns about the national movement toward a longer school year. An additional three eastern Oregon districts have successfully implemented a four and one half-day week. The appendix includes state criteria for approval of alternative school calendar proposals, charts outlining calendars and daily schedules, and a list of participant Oregon schools. (SV)

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MORE WITH FOUR

A Look at the Four Day Week in Oregon's Small Schools

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In Oregon the definition of a small school is a K-12 district or unified high school district with an average daily membership of less than 1,000 students or an elementary or union high district with an ADM of 350 or less. This constitutes 71% of all the districts in the state, but only 14% of the students. The isolated rural location of many of these schools means long bus rides to school and to other districts of similar sizes to participate in athletic events. Coupled with the decrease in financial resources forcing many schools to cut back on programs, school superintendents looked to new ways to keep quality programs and maintain standards.

New Mexico and Colorado had successful four-day programs in place and were ready to serve as positive models for other states such as Oregon who were looking for alternatives. The Colorado Report by Richburg and Daly in the Spring of '83 provided the needed research into the feasibility of such a program.

Beginning with the 1982-83 school year, two Southern Oregon schools, Prospect and Days Creek, implemented the four-day school week on a one year trial basis. Today they are still operating on this schedule and have been joined by five other districts in Eastern Oregon; Burnt River, Cove, Union, Paisley and North Powder. Two other districts, Scio (1975-76) and Rogue River (1983-86), attempted the program but have returned to the five-day week.

The primary purpose to change to a four-day week was the reduction in costs. Each of these schools had faced serious financial difficulties. State Superintendent Verne Duncan and Department of Education staff formulated procedures to allow these districts to apply for a waiver of OAR 581-22-502, the standard which requires 175 days of instruction in Oregon schools. Any district desiring to operate on the four day week must submit a request for a waiver [See Appendix] to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education, 90 days prior to implementation. Included in the application must be:

1. A copy of the local board resolution approving application for waiver.

2. An outline of the basic plan for operating the alternative school calendar including:
   - o Need being addressed by the proposal,
   - o Goals for the proposal,
   - o Plan for accomplishing goals by maintaining instructional time, the impact on student activities, impact on support programs and the estimated savings.

3. A staff development plan for implementing and maintaining the alternative calendar program.

4. A student and parent orientation plan.

5. A plan for keeping community involved and informed of program progress.

6. Procedures and line for gathering data.

Quarterly reports are to be submitted to the Department of Education with a Final Report due 30 days after the close of school.The positive results of the first two years of pilot programs operated by Days Creek and Prospect provided the incentive for other districts in similar financial situations to follow. By the 1985-86 school year, eight small district had waivers to implement a four-day week; North Powder, Cove, Paisley, Rogue River, Union, Burnt River, Days Creek, and Prospect.

The enthusiastic response from parents, staff and students on the annual surveys and during interviews has led to this conclusion:

There's <u>MORE WITH FOUR!</u>

- o <u>MORE</u> $ Savings

  "Save food, fuel, and finances" seemed to be the slogan for those promoting four-day weeks. Transportation and maintenance costs were down by 18%, bus gasoline savings from 15% to 23% and additional

energy savings (electricity, fuel oil) as well as classified employee's salaries (bus drivers, cooks, secretaries, aides, and custodians).

- o MORE Instructional Time/Student Contact Time

  Since the school day is approximately an hour longer, actual instructional time is increased. The increase in learning hours is due to the fact that set up time is necessary only four days instead of five and the length of each period is increased. This is especially important for science labs, voc. ed., etc. Teachers feel the pressure of needing to use the time more effectively and administration supports this by not allowing interruptions. Instructional techniques needed to change, involving less lecture and more active participation. Elementary teachers needed to balance academic subjects with activity and allow for snacks and relaxation periods.

  Student contact time for those involved in sports and other activities increased dramatically. One varsity player in Union High School lost 72 hours of instructional time under the five-day week. He now loses only 16 hours and this is due to spring sports scheduled during the week.

- o MORE Time for Staff Development

  The number of teacher work days varies from district to district but in each case Fridays may be used for inservices, staff meetings and other professional growth experiences. This uninterrupted time, free from students, is prime time to work on curriculum and other school improvement projects. Fridays may also be used to observe other school programs in the state, attend county and state level meetings, or attend college classes which are now being offered on some Fridays and Saturdays. In addition, Fridays are used for conferencing with parents which previously occurred during the weekly instructional time.

- o MORE Time for Co-Curricular and Extra Curricular Activities

  Using the one "off" day per week, students involved in sports and

other activities are finding longer practice times, less time out of the instructional day, and sufficient time for driving the long distances to games with districts of a similar size. For small rural districts, Fridays were previously a "lost day" as far as instruction was concerned. The team, cheerleaders, and pep squads comprised the majority of the high school student body. If the game involved hoursof travel time, instruction time suffered. Now most games and other activities are scheduled for the "off" day. Students involved in these activities are receiving an average of 4 weeks additional school time.

- o MORE Time for Families, Personal Business

  With Fridays off, many families choose to take mini-vacations, particularly in districts such as Days Creek where many parents are employed by the Forest Service who are also on a 4-day schedule. Fridays are also days for dental and doctor appointments and students are seldom excused to take time for these activities during the week. Whereas, parents previously took their students out of classes to go with them to town (often a 300 mile round trip), these trips are now saved for Fridays. Many students use the day for working on the family ranches or working for pay. The fear that a day off for students would cause problems by having them on the streets has not materialized.

- o MORE Regular Attendance by Students and Staff

  In all districts participating, school records showed a marked decrease in student absenteeism on the four-day week. As one Days Creek teacher commented, "If kids miss school, they're in serious trouble. We cover more material so it affects them more when they miss a day."

  Union School District Superintendent, Bob Perriman reported a 27.5% decrease in teacher absenteeism. This leads to an additional savings in substitute costs.

As absenteeism is directly affected to achievement, one of the benefits of increased attendance is increased academic gains and higher morale.

- MORE Positive Feelings, High Morale, Success

  Over 90% of the parents, students and staff surveyed in Colorado in 1982 expressed enthusiasm for the four-day week. Surveys in Oregon had much the same results ranging from 80 - 100% support for continuation of the program. In 1984, 93% of Days Creek parents supported the program.

  Students and teachers are more ready for Monday and teachers feel less burn-out even though the 9 hour days are tiring. Over 50% use the extra day to prepare and still feel they have time to accomplish home demands and appointments.

  Most students interviewed liked the plan and school districts noticed a decline in discipline cases.

- MORE Support and Parental Involvement

  Involving parents, staff, students and other community members in the planning stages, development and yearly evaluations promotes a feeling of oneness and mutual support for a program. In Days Creek, parents volunteer to teach crafts on Fridays and parents in other districts provide car pools for Friday activities.

  Parents supporting the change to a four-day schedule do their best to keep their kids in school and are happy to have them home with them on the extra day for chores or family outings.

  In one district parents were concerned about athletic practices running late and after dark so they raised the money to provide lights for the football field.

  As one Superintendent stated, "There is so much support for the four-day week, I'd have to leave the district if I tried to ever go back to a 5-day plan."

o MORE? Student Achievement Gain

Overall achievement gains have been difficult to assess because cumulative test data for small schools is sometimes lacking, although all districts maintained or showed slight increases in achievement. Primary grades in Union showed a 39% gain over a 3 year period. However, other grades showed more modest gains.

The results to date have not shown that the 4-day week has an adverse effect on student learning . Less interruptions, more student/teacher contact time, longer instructional periods, less absenteeism plus support of all involved sets the stage for greater learning.

DISADVANTAGES

No programs exist without some drawbacks and the following disadvantages have been noted by those involved in the four-day week:

1. Once a decision is made to operate a four-day week, the decision is difficult to reverse. The budget reductions may prove very difficult to restore . A district in Eastern Oregon who originally saved $25,000 by going to the four-day week four years ago now estimates it will cost $50,000 to restore the five-day week.

2. Financial savings to the school may not be savings for some parents. Many schools report a 18-20% reduction in bus transportation costs, however, these costs may be shouldered by students and parents who drive their own cars for activities on the days school is not in session. Also, heat, lights, TV, etc. are in more demand at home. Babysitting must be provided in some cases where parents work, however there is greater availability of high school students for this job.

3. Longer days are difficult for younger children and schedules need to include time for rest and snacks. In some cases, very long bus rides are added to the extended day and concern was raised about having children leave and arrive home in the darkness of winter months. However, the

Superintendent of Days Creek School District, Steve Johnson, felt that the children adjusted more easily than the teachers and after the first month there was no problem with the extended day. Teachers reported being under more stress to accomplish everything in four days and to maximize the time given. The 9 hour days were "tiring" but over 90% on surveys wished to continue and felt that the extra day off was worth it.

4. Loss of retention for Special Education students and Chapter I students after 3 days off was a concern. However, data collected at Union School District showed the achievement level remained the same. More study is needed to determine if this is indeed a problem.

5. If Monday is a holiday and Friday is the scheduled "off" day then a number of three day weeks is the result. However, districts resolved this problem by scheduling Fridays as the alternate day for classes in the event that any of the four instructional days were lost to holidays or emergency school closures.

6. With the new reform movement in the nation, longer school years (200-220 days) are being promoted. It may become difficult to adopt a calendar of 145-155 instructional days. For those choosing to remain on the programs, there will be a need to lengthen the school year and readjust to meet the new time requirements. However, the four-day week can still be implemented if needed and desired.

Success or failure of any program depends on the involvement of all concerned. For districts contemplating an interest in changing to a four-day schedule, consider the following steps to implementation:

1. Conduct a feasibility study utilizing a study committee. Collect and study research done and visit other districts on the program.
2. Inform and involve the community, all school employees, students through meetings, public hearings, and surveys.
3. Adopt a school board resolution.
4. Develop an implementation and evaluation plan.
5. Petition the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for a waiver of required number of instructional days.

Administrators, staff, and boards should be able to state the goals and assure the community that essential educational programs and services will not be detrimentally affected and the program will be continually monitored.

The Four and One Half Day Week

Another alternative to the 5-day week has surfaced and is becoming very popular in smaller high school districts. The four-and-a-half-day school week was implemented by 3 Eastern Oregon schools; Enterprise, Burnt River and Imbler, in an attempt to save instructional time frequently lost by athletic events held on Fridays. Again the hours needed to travel and number of students involved made Friday afternoons a waste of instructional time. The plan developed included increasing time to each of the four days and dismissing classes after lunch on Fridays. Since this meets the requirement for Oregon standards, no waiver was needed. The cost savings is not comparable to a school on a four-day week as buses, lunch programs and buildings are in use. However, there are some $ savings on Fridays when substitutes are needed for the half day. Teachers as well as students are considered absent for a full day if they are absent on Friday mornings. There has been a decrease in absenteeism under this plan. Some savings are also realized on classified salaries for those secretaries and aides who only work until noon on Fridays.

Both districts, Imbler and Enterprise, feel the program serves the students and the instructional program. For districts situated in a rural area that need an alternative way to meet the needs of student participation in sports without loss of instructional time, this appears to be a viable solution.

CONCLUSION:

The four and four and a half day school programs offer solutions to small rural schools with financial and instructional needs. Strong support is evidenced by surveys of all concerned. The advantages appear to outweigh the disadvantages at this point. Cooperation and assistance from the State Department of Education and assistance from other states with successful programs as well as from parents, staff, and administrators have made these programs work.

At the present time these alternative scheduling models are unique to small schools. Whether it would be feasible to implement them in an urban school or in one with an ADM over 1,000 has not been tested.

APPENDIX

- Criteria for Approving Alternative School Calendar Proposals
- Application for Continuation of Alternative School Calendar
- Sample Daily Schedules - Elementary Secondary
- Proposed Annual Calendar and Teacher Work Year
- Comparison Chart
- News Articles
- Oregon Schools on 4 and 4 1/2 Day Weeks
- School Superintendents and Addresses

CRITERIA FOR APPROVING ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL CALENDAR PROPOSALS

1. Initial or continuing applications for an alternative school year shall be submitted to Superintendent of Public Instruction at least 90 days prior to the implementation of the program.

2. The initial application shall contain:

   2.1 Request from local school district for waiver of Standard 581-22-502 including a copy of local board resolution approving application for waiver and agreeing to pilot program status.

   2.2 Outline of the basic plan for operating alternative school calendar to include:

      2.2.1 Need addressed by the proposal.
      2.2.2 Goals of the proposal.
      2.2.3 Plan for accomplishing goals to include at least:

         - Maintaining instructional time with present and proposed schedules.
         - Impact on support programs (i.e., counseling, safety, media).
         - Impact on student activities.
         - Impact on school standards.
         - List of estimated saving including a statement from auditor.

   2.3 Provide a staff development plan for implementing and maintaining the alternative calendar program.

   2.4 Provide a student and parent orientation plan.

   2.5 Provide a plan for keeping community involved and informed of program progress.

3. Provide an evaluation plan.

   3.1 Develop a procedure and timeline for gathering data for evaluation.

   3.2 Develop checkpoints for monitoring by staff, board, ESD and Department of Education.

   3.3 Provide the Department of Education with a written quarterly progress report.

   3.4 Agree to provide the Department of Education a complete evaluation report 30 days following the close of school. The report shall include at a minimum the following data:

      3.4.1 Impact on student achievement pre- and post-achievement scores and comparison scale of 198 -8 /198 -8 .

3.4.2 Student adjustment and reaction--document.
3.4.3 Staff adjustment and reaction--document.
3.4.4 Parent/home adjustment and reaction--document.
3.4.5 Cost comparisons and previous year's expenditures.
3.4.6 Comparison of student attendance.
3.4.7 Transportation and facility utilization changes.
3.4.8 Evidence of any changes which may have added or deferred from educational opportunities and services under this plan as compared to traditional calendar.
3.4.9 The district may include any other data it deems necessary to support the program.

APPLICATION FOR CONTINUATION OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL CALENDAR

1. Applications for continuation as a pilot program for the alternative school calendar shall be submitted to Superintendent of Public Instruction (60 days prior to implementation).

2. Application for a continuation year pilot program status shall include:

   a. Waiver statement.
   b. Report of prior year evaluation.
   c. Changes in plan differing from first year plan.
   d. Rationale for continuation.

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Union SD #5

PROPOSED STUDENT DAY

The following charts compare present school schedules with a proposed four-day week schedule.

SECONDARY

Present Schedule		Proposed Schedule Four-Day Week	
8:15 - 11:55	= 220 Minutes	8:00 - 11:12	= 192 Minutes
11:55 - 12:29	= Lunch	11:12 - 11:42	= Lunch
12:29 - 3:05	= 156 Minutes	11:42 - 4:04	= 262 Minutes
Total minutes per day	= 376	Total minutes per day	= 454

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME ANALYSIS

As shown by the proposed calendar, 145 instructional days are recommended under the four-day week schedule. This calendar provides an annual instructional program of 1,097 hours compared to the present five-day week which provides 1.096 hours of instructional time.

The four-day week more than meets Department of Education requirements.

Chart 2

Union SD #5

ELEMENTARY

The Elementary grades have individualized schedules. However the following present and proposed are typical.

Present Schedule			Proposed Schedule		
8:15 - 10:00	=	105 Minutes	8:00 - 10:15	=	135 Minutes
10:00 - 10:15	=	Recess	10:15 - 10:30	=	Recess
10:15 - 11:00	=	45 Minutes	10:30 - 11:40	=	70 Minutes
11:00 - 11:50	=	Lunch	11:40 - 12:30	=	Lunch
11:50 - 1:00	=	70 Minutes	12:30 - 1:30	=	60 Minutes
1:00 - 1:30	=	30 Minutes (PE & Rest)	1:30 - 2:00	=	30 Minutes (PE & Rest)
1:30 - 2:15	=	45 Minutes	2:00 - 3:05	=	65 Minutes
Total minutes per day	=	295	Total minutes per day	=	360

Present Schedule

175 teaching days X 295 minutes per day = 51,625 annual minutes of instruction.

Proposed Schedule

145 teaching days X 360 minutes per day = 52,200 annual minutes of instruction.

The proposed four day week schedule actually provides more instruction time than provided under the present schedule.

Chart 3

Union SD #5

Proposed Annual Calendar

The proposed calendar provides for 145 teaching days, 15 teacher in-service days and 6 paid holidays. Assuming a basic teacher work day of 9.25 hours per day for student contact days and 8 hours for all other days, this calendar would allow for 7 flexible in-service or curriculum development days to be assigned by the Superintendent according to need.

Present Teacher Work Year

Teaching days	175 days X 8 hours	=	1,400 hours
In-service days	7 days X 8 hours	=	56 hours
Paid holidays	6 days X 8 hours	=	48 hours.
Total hours worked	= 5,504		

Proposed Teacher Work Year

Teaching days	145 days X 9.25 hours	=	1,341 hours
In-service days	15 days X 8 hours	=	120 hours
Paid holidays	6 days X 8 hours	=	48 hours
Total hours worked	= 1,509		

Chart 4

COMPARISON CHART

	Financial Saving	Sch.Size (ADM) (1986-87)	Length of Day	# Instruction Days	# Teacher Work Days
Prospect	$ 30,023 ('82-83)	520	8:15-3:30	145	157
Days Creek	$120,000	263	8:30-4:00	147	170
Rogue River	$135,694	582	8:10-3:00	146	167
Union	$25,000-40,000	472	8:00-4:04	145	166
Burnt River	$12,000-15,000	80	8:00-3:30	145	
Cove	$21,000-25,000	212	8:00-4:05		

STATE OF OREGON

	4 DAY SCHOOLS		4 1/2 DAY SCHOOLS	
1975 - 76	1)	Scio	1984 - 85	1) Burnt River
				2) Enterprise
1982 - 83	1)	Prospect	1985 - 86	1) Imbler
	2)	Days Creek		2) Enterprise
1983 - 84	1)	Prospect	1986 - 87	1) Imbler
	2)	Days Creek		2) Enterprise
	3)	Rogue River		
	4)	Union		
1984 - 85	1)	Prospect		
	2)	Days Creek		
	3)	Rogue River		
	4)	Union		
	5)	Cove		
	6)	Paisley		
1985 - 86	1)	Prospect		
	2)	Days Creek		
	3)	Rogue River		
	4)	Union		
	5)	Burnt River		
	6)	Cove		
	7)	Paisley		
	8)	North Powder		
1986 - 87	1)	Prospect		
	2)	Days Creek		
	3)	Union		
	4)	Burnt River		
	5)	Cove		
	6)	Paisley		
	7)	North Powder		

STATE OF OREGON
4 - 4 1/2 Day School
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